

## LINER NOTES

### Led Kaapana Waltz of the Wind

With over twenty albums to his credit and tours of Polynesia, the Mainland, Japan and Europe, Led Kaapana is one of Hawai'i's most prolific and beloved traditional musicians. A master of *ki ho'alu* (slack key guitar), he is also accomplished on 'ukulele, steel guitar, autoharp and bass. In addition, he is a fine singer in both baritone and *leo ki'eki'e* (falsetto). Perhaps most importantly, Led blends his virtuosity with an infectious love for performing and a disposition as sunny as May Day in Hawai'i–nei, which endears him to audiences and fellow musicians around the world.

Born August 25, 1948, Led grew up in a very musical family in the tiny village of Kalapana on the Big Island of Hawai'i. His nine brothers and sisters, parents, aunts, uncles, cousins and neighbors all played something. "We didn't have electricity, no television, not even much radio, so we entertained ourselves," Led says. "You could go to any house and everybody was playing music." Parties in Kalapana were famous for *kanikapila* (jam session), which sometimes went on for days. "People played in shifts, taking over when somebody went to bed. You'd fall asleep to the music, wake up and the music was still playing. That was the best alarm clock I ever had! Even today when I play, I still picture all the *'ohana* (family) getting together and sharing their songs and their aloha."

Like most Hawaiian musicians, Led learned by watching and listening, then joining in. In this way he developed an excellent ear and a seemingly inexhaustible ability to improvise. Like the great jazz saxophonist Charlie Parker, Led seldom plays a song the same way twice. "I don't think about it much," he says. "Whatever comes, even if I've never heard the song before, I just try to find a spot to fit in. The main thing is to play from the heart and don't show off, always support the other musicians. To me, that's slack key."

Led cites his mother, singer Tina Kaapana, and his uncle, slack key legend Fred Punahoa, as his main influences. "I feel a real strong connection to what they and the other *kupuna* (elders) shared with me," Led says. "I've been lucky to play with so many *kupuna*: my mom and dad (the late George Kaapana), Uncle Fred, Aunt Genoa Keawe, Gabby Pahinui, Uncle Barney Isaacs, The Ho'opi'i Brothers." But he also enjoys a wide variety of other styles. "At the same time, I've always listened to country, jazz, Latin music, even rock and roll. Sometimes back in Kalapana I'd sneak a little **Pipeline** or **Walk, Don't Run** into the Hawaiian music. My dad would say, 'Hey, that's not slack key.' But nobody ever stopped me. They just said to play what you feel and play with aloha."

In 1972, with his brother Ned and cousin Dennis Pavao, he relocated to Honolulu and formed the popular trio Hui Ohana. Their traditional yet contemporary approach took them to a prominent place on the Hawaiian music scene. Hui Ohana recorded fourteen albums and played regularly throughout the Islands, often inviting Mama Tina to join them. After they disbanded, Led formed his trio, I Kona, named after the classic song he learned from his mother. I Kona has recorded five albums to date and plays regularly on the local circuit.

Recording in Nashville has long been one of Led's dreams, stretching back to days spent as a child listening to Chet Atkins, Roy Clark and other country greats. Making the dream come true started in 1989 with his first trip to the Mainland. "On the way home from the Smithsonian Festival (of American Folklife) in Washington D.C., Dancing Cat set up a gig for me at the Bluebird Cafe in Nashville," Led recalls. "It was the first time I ever played solo in public and the first time I met Chet Atkins. I was really nervous, but it was a good test. After that I wasn't afraid anymore." Selected tracks from Led's live performance at the Bluebird were later issued on his first Dancing Cat album, LED LIVE - SOLO (Dancing Cat 38008), one of three solo slack key albums he's made.

After the 1989 trip, Led received an invitation to join the prestigious Masters of the Steel String Guitar tour. For three seasons, he traveled the Mainland with leading players from many genres, such as Albert Lee, Robert Junior Lockwood, Tal Farlow, Jerry Douglas, and others. From this experience, the idea of an album pairing Led with country musicians gradually took shape. Finally in March of 1998, Led and his wife Sharon flew to Nashville with guitars and an 'ukulele in tow.

Meetings followed with producer Steve Buckingham and Pat Bergeson, the renowned guitarist whom Steve chose to help write the charts. "Pat was a key to the whole project," Led says. "I really enjoyed his playing, his company, his *mana'o* (thoughts). I learned a lot from him. And he really caught on to slack key fast. He even wrote a song in Taro Patch tuning. Pat says playing with me inspired him. He inspired me too. I'm very grateful to him; and to Steve. I'm really honored that he wanted to play on the album too. I really didn't expect that. It's a really big compliment that the music inspired him that way."

As the sessions began, all the artists Steve assembled fell into perfect sync. The playing got hot and the studio took on a warm familial glow that Led very much appreciated. "All the hospitality, all the aloha. It was just like one big family, real Hawaiian style, telling jokes, talking story, sharing back and forth. You can feel the love. It comes out in the music."

For Led, WALTZ OF THE WIND marks the happy ending of a long journey that began in childhood. "I've always wanted to do this for as long as I can remember," he says. In many ways, it also points to a new beginning. "It's awesome. I feel like my career is just starting at the age of fifty."

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## THE SONGS

1. ***Radio Hula***  
(Lizzie Kahau Alohikea)  
arranged by Led Kaapana, c1994 Hula Cat Music (BMI)/Jus' Press Music (BMI)

**Led Kaapana:** slack key guitar

**Pat Bergeson:** guitar

**Viktor Krauss:** upright bass

**Tom Roady:** percussion  
**Joey Miskulin:** accordion

Royal Hawaiian Band singer Lizzie Kahau Alohikea composed this *mele hula* (song with choreography) in the 1920s to celebrate the arrival of radio in the Islands. Led's Uncle Fred created an arrangement for slack key in the 1940s. Led learned it as a teenager and uses it as the basis for his own improvisations. The Nashville session marks the first time he's recorded it with so many backing musicians, including percussion and accordion. "It was nice having all that support," he says. "It takes the song to a whole new dimension."

2. ***My Yellow Ginger Lei***

(John Keawehawai'i)

arranged by Led Kaapana, c1998 Hula Cat Music (BMI)/Jus' Press Music (BMI)

**Led Kaapana:** slack key guitar  
**Steve Buckingham:** gut string guitar

John Keawehawai'i composed this *mele ho'oipoipo* (love song) using *kaona* (hidden meaning). Slack key guitarist Leonard Kwan recorded a definitive arrangement of it on his 1960 album SLACK KEY (Tradewinds 1006), which Led uses here as the basis for this brief excerpt on a steel string guitar. Producer Steve Buckingham joins him on a gut string guitar. "This one has that real old time Hawaiian style," Led says.

3. ***Waltz of the Wind***

(Fred Rose)

c1947, renewed 1974 Milene Music, Inc. (ASCAP)

**Led Kaapana:** 'ukulele  
**Alison Krauss:** vocal & viola  
**Pat Bergeson:** guitar & bass harmonica  
**Viktor Krauss:** upright bass  
**Tom Roady:** percussion

*Reprise:*

**Led Kaapana:** Del Vecchio resonator guitar  
**Sam Bush:** mandolin

As old-time musician and composer Teri Rasmussen has written in her piece **Three Quarter Time**: "A waltz is a dance you can learn when you're young or old, gives you great pleasure with each passing line, when this old world has no reason nor rhyme, it can always get better in three quarter time."

Waltzes were very fashionable with late 19th century Hawaiian composers. Many classics of that era continue to enjoy widespread popularity, especially those by Hawai'i's beloved last monarch, Queen Lili'uokalani (1845-1923). Waltzes are also a staple of the bluegrass world, especially those by bluegrass patriarch Bill Monroe. As such, it seemed natural, even essential, to include a waltz in this historic collaboration between Hawaiian

and bluegrass musicians. A number of tunes were considered, but when Led performed this 1947 Fred Rose song for Alison and Pat in Nashville, everyone got what bluegrass musicians call goose bumps and Hawaiians call chicken skin. There was no longer any question what waltz it would be, only how to make the recording express the sweetness and magic everyone felt.

Pat and Led quickly crafted an instrumental verse in F. "It's a good key for 'ukulele," Led says. "The open positions give it a fuller sound." Alison's vocal verse modulates to C. She sings with an ethereal delicacy that matches Led's playing and evokes the highly cherished mood Hawaiians call *nahenahe* (relaxed, gentle). "Her singing is so beautiful," Led says. "It gives me chicken skin." The feeling is apparently mutual. During the recording, Alison could be seen peeking through the window and smiling at Led during his solo.

A reprise of the melody ends the track. Mandolin master Sam Bush adds his magic touch as Led plays a rare and beautiful Del Vecchio resonator guitar Pat brought to the studio. "It's got a great sound," Led says. "Big *mahalo* (thanks) to Pat for sharing it with me."

#### 4. *'Opihi Moemoe*

(Leonard Kwan)

c1974 Hula Cat Music/Ke'ala Music (BMI)

**Led Kaapana:** slack key guitar

**Pat Bergeson:** guitar

**Viktor Krauss:** upright bass

**Kayton Roberts:** steel guitar

**Tom Roady:** percussion

*Reprise:*

**Led Kaapana:** Del Vecchio resonator guitar

**Steve Buckingham:** guitar

**Kayton Roberts:** steel guitar

*'Opihi Moemoe* is the signature tune of Leonard Kwan, one of the three most influential slack key guitarists of the post-war era, and appears on Leonard's landmark album *SLACK KEY*. The title refers to a sleeping mollusk, but the song typically makes guitarists of all kinds wake up and take notice. Led learned it off the radio as a teenager.

Nashville patriarch Chet Atkins heard *Opihi Moemoe* played by his caddie while golfing in Hawai'i. Although he did not know the title, he recorded the melody with his own set of beautiful variations on his 1974 album *ALONE* (RCA APL1-0159). Led says, "I was scheduled to do this as a duet with Chet, but we couldn't get together this time. But I enjoyed the chance to play with all these other big guns. To be a part of this and share all the talents was awesome."

The reprise features Led again on the Del Vecchio. "I gotta get me one of those," says Led.

5. ***Move It On Over***

(Hank Williams)

1947, renewed 1974 Acuff-Rose Music, Inc. (BMI)/Hiriam Music (BMI)

**Led Kaapana:** 'ukulele

**Ricky Skaggs:** lead vocal & mandolin

**Jerry Douglas:** dobro

**Pat Bergeson:** guitar

**Viktor Krauss:** upright bass

**Tom Roady:** percussion

Hank Williams debuted this honky-tonkin' tale of changed locks and ad hoc accommodations in 1947 as his first single for the newly formed MGM label. In tune with the trends of the time, it enjoyed great success. It also influenced younger players like Bill Haley and Carl Perkins who launched the rockabilly revolution a few years later.

In this recording, bluegrass superstar Ricky Skaggs contributes a hot mandolin break and playful vocal that nicely compliments the rowdy, rockin' band. Ricky's ad libbed "hula on over" and Led's tough but tender *pa'ani* (playing) both add a nice Hawaiian touch.

For the Country Music Foundation archives and any other interested parties, the background chorus includes Pat Bergeson, Ben Churchill, Larry Hamby, J.W. Junker, Led Kaapana, Viktor Krauss and Tom Roady.

6. ***Steel Guitar Rag***

(music by Leon McAuliffe; words by Merle Travis and Cliff Stone)

c 1941, renewed 1969 Bourne Co. (ASCAP)

**Led Kaapana:** 'ukulele

**Jerry Douglas:** Weissenborn steel guitar

**Pat Bergeson:** guitar

**Viktor Krauss:** upright bass

**Tom Roady:** percussion

Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys recorded **Steel Guitar Rag** in 1936. Credited to Playboy steel whiz Leon McAuliffe (who may have adapted it from Sylvester Weaver's 1923 piece, **Guitar Rag**), the song quickly became a standard. The suggestion to feature it on this album came from Led's longtime friend, Jerry "Flux" Douglas, who plays a vintage Weissenborn on the track. Behind him, Led plays a rolling 'ukulele pattern that sounds suspiciously like a banjo. "That was a lot of fun," Led says. "Flux always blows me away. He's a master of the metal bar."

7. ***Koke'e***

(Dennis Kamakahi)

c1979 Naukilo Publishing (ASCAP)

**Led Kaapana:** autoharp & slack key guitar

**Stuart Duncan:** fiddle

"Nevermore to say good-bye" ends the refrain of this *mele pana* (place song) composed by Rev. Dennis Kamakahi for a beautiful and spiritually powerful spot on the island of Kaua'i. Dennis' own recording, with vocals, appears on his album [PUA`ENA \(GLOW BRIGHTLY\)](#). For this instrumental rendition, Led and noted fiddler Stuart Duncan play in support of the autoharp, which Led fingerpicks. "I love the way the *kupuna*(elders) played autoharp back in Kalapana. They picked it too," Led says. "When Buck heard a tape we made of solo autoharp, all the picking blew him away. The guitar and fiddle were added in Nashville. I hope Dennis enjoys it. I've already got a jacket like his, and a hat and boots. I want him to give me his gloves!"

8. *Les Flammes d'Enfer*

(Traditional)

arranged by Sonny Landreth

**Led Kaapana:** slack key guitar

**Sonny Landreth:** electric slide guitar

**Pat Bergeson:** guitar & harmonica

**Steve Buckingham:** electric baritone guitar

**Viktor Krauss:** upright bass

**Tom Roady:** snare, surdo

"*Oh, petite tante, pries pour moi. Sauvez mon ame des flammes d'Enfer.* (Little heart, pray for me. Save me from the flames of Hell.)" So begin the lyrics to this lively Cajun two-step. It dates back to the traditional era but remains a favorite on the dance hall circuit. A popular vintage recording appears on THE BALFA BROTHERS PLAY TRADITIONAL CAJUN MUSIC (Swallow 6011). This new, harder instrumental marks the first meeting between Led and Louisiana slide guitarist Sonny Landreth. "I was really surprised Sonny played in Open G too," Led says. "We hit it off right away."

9. *Ku'u Ipo Onaona*

(Madeleine K. Lam)

c1951, renewed 1979 Criterion Music Corporation (ASCAP)

**Led Kaapana:** slack key guitar

**Sonny Landreth:** National steel guitar

The title of this Maddy Lam classic translates as "my lovely sweetheart." The term is often used by lovers, especially when speaking in *na leo nahenahe* (gentle voices). Led recorded a faster solo version on [LED LIVE - SOLO](#). "Sonny finger picks too," he says. "We came up with this real laid back arrangement, a lot slower than the way I usually play it."

10. *Yesterday*

(Marian Santiago)

**Led Kaapana:** slack key guitar & lead vocal

**Sam Bush:** mandolin

**Stuart Duncan:** fiddle

**Joey Miskulin:** accordion

**Steve Buckingham:** bass

*background vocals:*

**John Wesley Ryles**

**Dennis Wilson**

**Curtis Young**

Led's friends in Ka Leo O Ka Lani recorded this Marian Santiago ballad in the mid-1980s. When requests started coming in at gigs, Led learned the song too. "I like the rhythm and melody," he says. "To me it's got a real country feel."

#### 11. *Spanish Eyes*

(music by Bert Kaempfert, words by Charles Singleton and Eddie Snyder)

c1965 Screen Gems/EMI Music Inc. (BMI)

**Led Kaapana:** 'ukulele & Del Vecchio resonator guitar

**Pat Bergeson:** guitar

**Viktor Krauss:** upright bass

**Tom Roady:** percussion

While Led has played this popular melody for years, it was not originally slated for the album. Its inclusion dates from that fateful afternoon at Pat and Alison's, when Led picked up the 'ukulele and jaws dropped around the room. "The 'ukulele really got me in the door," Led says. "Without it I might still be standing outside." In love with its sound, Led overdubs one last Del Vecchio solo. "I really, really gotta get me one of those!" Led says.

#### 12. *My Sweetheart*

(Led Kaapana)

c1998 Hula Cat Music (BMI)/Jus' Press Music (BMI)

**Led KaapanaL:** slack key guitar & vocal

**Bob Brozman:** Bear Creek Baby Kona acoustic steel guitar

Since the late 19th century, Hawaiian musicians have roamed the world sharing their music and their aloha, and frequently succumbing to that very creative form of homesickness that finds its outlet in the composing of new songs. Many Hawaiian standards, such as **Lei 'Awapuhi** from the 1900s, **Waikiki** from the 1930s, **Ku'u Home O Kahalu'u** from the 1970s and **Island Style** from the 1990s, were written away from the Islands. Led composed this charming love song as a musical postcard while performing in Tahiti. As the lyrics point out, Tahiti looks like Hawai'i. The two Polynesian cultures are also very closely connected, but Tahiti can seem very far away from Hawai'i under certain conditions. "I wrote it for my wife Sharon," Led says. "We usually travel together, but that trip she was only with me in my heart. I missed her, but

playing the song brought her closer."

This version, recorded in San Francisco with Bob Brozman assisting on a small version of the classic Weissenborn guitar, evokes the feel of the 1920s. "Playing with Bob sometimes feels like a trip back in time to the way the *kupuna* played," Led says. In 1995, Bob and Led recorded [KIKI KILA MEETS KI HO'ALU](#), a pure duet album of acoustic steel guitar and slack key.

13. ***Hanohano Hanalei***

(Alfred Alohikea)

arranged by Led Kaapana and Bob Brozman, c1998 Hula Cat Music (BMI)/Jus' Press Music (BMI)/White Spats Music (BMI)

**Led Kaapana:** 1937 Martin tenor guitar

**Bob Brozman:** 1929 Gibson L5 archtop guitar

One of the most famous songs about the beautiful garden island of Kaua'i, **Hanohano Hanalei** was composed by Alfred Alohikea in the mid-1920's. This ragtime/jazz influenced piece was inspired by of the natural beauty of Hanalei Valley, on the rainy side of Kaua'i.

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**(Bonus tracks)**

14. ***Honeysuckle Rose*** (Bonus track)

(music by Thomas "Fats" Waller, words by Andy Razaf)

c1929, renewed The Songwriter's Guild/Anne-Rachel Music Corporation (ASCAP)

**Led Kaapana:** slack key guitar

**George Winston:** stride piano

Fats Waller's swing era classic gets a real workout in the key of F on this rare and exciting jam with pianist George Winston. Recorded live in the studio, it is actually edited down from over seven minutes. "I've played **Honeysuckle Rose** for years," Led says. "George has too, so we decided to record it. Jamming is such a big part of playing but it hardly ever gets recorded. That's one of the nicest things about Dancing Cat; they give you lots of space in the studio to do whatever you want." George says, "I'm basically very much a solo player, but Led is incredible to play with. We've played for three hours straight before, everything from '**Opihi Moemoe** to **House of the Rising Sun** on various instruments; then we stopped and realized we had to get to work and record."

15. ***Mockin' Bird Hill*** (Bonus track)

(Vaughn Horton)

c1949, renewed Cromwell Music Inc. (ASCAP)

**Led Kaapana:** 6 string guitar

A beautiful solo guitar rendition in C tuning, of the 1951 Patty Page hit.

Liner notes by J.W. Junker with technical assistance by George Winston.

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## **TUNINGS USED BY LED KAAPANA ON THIS ALBUM:**

### **Guitar:**

**Open G Major "Taro Patch" tuning (D–G–D–G–B–D)** for Radio Hula, My Yellow Ginger Lei (tuned down to F), 'Opihi Moemoe, Les Flammes d'Enfer and Ku'u Ipo Onaona.

**Open C Major "Wahine" tuning (C–G–D–G–B–D)** for Yesterday and My Sweetheart.

"Wahine" is the name for a tuning with a major 7th note in it, here the B note on the second string. This C "Wahine" tuning is also referred to as "Leonard's C" because it is frequently used by slack key guitarist Leonard Kwan.

**Standard tuning (E–A–D–G–B–E)** for Koke'e, Spanish Eyes, Hanohano Hanalei and Honeysuckle Rose.

**Dropped C tuning (C–G–D–G–B–D)** for Mockin' Bird Hill.

### **'Ukulele:**

**Standard tuning (G–C–E–A)** for Waltz of the Wind, Move It On Over, Steel Guitar Rag and Spanish Eyes. The 'ukulele is tuned to the same relative pitches as the guitar but up a fourth. Therefore, if an individual is playing in the guitar fingerings of G, the 'ukulele will sound in the key of C.

Produced by Steve Buckingham

AR: Larry Hamby

Production Assistant: Jennie Carey

Engineers: Gary Paczosa and Toby Seay

Assistant Engineer: Greg Parker

Recorded March 25–30, 1998 at 17 Grand and The Doghouse, Nashville, Tennessee

Led Kaapana's autoharp track on Koke'e engineered by Hutchi Boy-ee at Skraps Recording Studio in Kane'ohe, HI

My Sweetheart, Hanohano Hanalei and Honeysuckle Rose engineered by Howard Johnston

Mixed by Gary Paczosa at The Doghouse

Edited by Don Cobb and mastered by Denny Purcell at Georgetown Masters

Graphic design by Sonny Mediana

Cover photograph by Sonny Mediana

Alison Krauss appears courtesy of Rounder Records

Ricky Skaggs appears courtesy of Skaggs Family Records

Bob Brozman appears courtesy of Sky Ranch Records

Led and the band dedicate this album *me ke aloha pumehana* (with love) to Chet Atkins, a true friend to guitarists everywhere.

Led would like to thank Chet Atkins for his inspiration and also his support of Hawaiian slack key guitar music for many years. Led says "Mahalo to Steve Buckingham for producing this album, and for assembling such an amazing group of talented musicians. It was my sincere privilege working with all of you on this record, it was also a dream come true for me."

**Thanks to:**

Pat Bergeson, Viktor Krauss, Tom Roady, Alison Krauss, Ricky Skaggs, Jerry Douglas, Sonny Landreth, Bob Brozman, Sam Bush, Stuart Duncan, Joey Miskulin, Kayton Roberts and engineers Gary Paczosa, Toby Seay and assistant engineer Greg Parker.

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